FOURTH CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST 1330 Lakeshore Ave.
Oakland
Alameda County
California 94606

HABS No. CA-2272

HABS CAL, 1-0AK,

# **PHOTOGRAPHS**

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey National Park Service, Western Region Department of the Interior San Francisco, California 94102

HABS No. CA-2272

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY FOURTH CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST

LOCATION: 1330 Lakeshore Ave.,

Oakland, Alameda County, California 94606

Eastern shore of Lake Merritt

USGS Oakland West 7.5" Quadrangle

UTM Coordinates: Zone 10

Northing: 4183600 Easting: 565460

PRESENT OWNER: Lake Merritt United Methodist Church,

3755 13th Avenue,

Oakland, California 94610

PRESENT OCCUPANT: Unoccupied

DATE OF THIS REPORT: 1 February 1989

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist, was church home to its congregation from its construction, between 1920 and 1923, to the date of sale of the property, April 15, 1984. This building was a familiar sight to the people of Oakland, being visible from all shores of Lake Merritt. It is directly across the lake from the Camron-Stanford House, the Alameda County Court House, and the Oakland Public Library, Main Building. The Eastern facade of the building is seen from many blocks of East Fourteenth Street.

This church building was significant because of its association with the congregation named above. Its style resembles many other Christian Science church buildings. It has been considered architecturally significant by the Oakland Citywide Preliminary Architectural and Historical Survey, conducted by the City Planning Department, and the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey (co-sponsored by the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board, and the Oakland Heritage Alliance). However, a vote of the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board of 1987 decided against the recording of this building on the Landmarks Preservation List. (1)

## PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

# A. History of Property

The following historical information is taken from "A Historical Sketch of Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist, in Oakland..." by John D. Stigen, April 1961:

The church was organized on December 16, 1910 and By-Laws adopted. A lease was executed for the use of Washington Hall, a second-floor auditorium on the corner of Sixth Avenue and East 12th Street, and the first service was held there Sunday January 1, 1911. The first Christian Science lecture was given by Doctor Fluno, of Oakland, in April 1911, and Judge Clifford Smith delivered the second lecture in November of the same year.

Services were continued at Washington Hall until June 30, 1912, when the congregation moved to the newly constructed Masonic Temple at Eighth Avenue and East 14th Street. Services were held at Masonic Temple for about five years, during which the church grew in membership and attendance. The church was incorporated in November 1915, and in October 1916 purchased a lot of 100 ft frontage and 160 feet deep on Lakeshore Avenue. In January 1917 a Building Committee was appointed. 1917 a lease was signed with the Municipal Auditorium and in April 1917 Sunday services were begun in the Theater and Wednesday Evening meetings in the Fourth Floor Ballroom. this time plans were being made for an auditorium seating 1-2000 and a Sunday School room on the same floor with a capacity of 400-It became apparent that the lot the church owned was inadequate to hold a structure as previously outlined.

In August 1918 the Auditorium management asked the church to find other temporary quarters as there was going to be a "Land Show" which would require the entire auditorium building during September and part of October. The church met this emergency by renting the Danish Hall on Eleventh Street for the period. When the "Land Show" was over the influenza epidemic was in progress and the auditorium was in use as a public hospital. During this time, there were no quarters available and the church held services in the open air on the parking lot and steps of the auditorium. Later city

permission was given to hold services on the church-owned lot on Lakeshore Avenue, where both Sunday and Wednesday services were held from October 30 to November 20, 1918, when the congregation was able to return to the Auditorium. In September 1919 the membership decided to purchase an additional 45-foot frontage-lot on Lakeshore Avenue adjacent to the owned property, making the larger, one floor building possible. On October 1, 1919 Sunday evening services were added.

On October 20, 1920, Mr. Carl Werner was selected as the architect for the church building and instructed to plan to build the Sunday School portion first as it might be used for services until the main portion might be built. On December 16, 1921, ground was broken for the project and the following March the architect was ordered to proceed with construction of the entire project. services were held in the Sunday School room in July 1922. The entire building was completed and first services were held on Sunday June 3, 1923, at 11 a.m. and at 3 and 8 p.m. church was dedicated on April 22, 1945 when all obligations had been paid. The church building was used continuously from July 1922 to July 1984 for public Christian Science services and Christian Science lectures and for denominational meetings on an almost daily (6) basis.

By the early 1970's, the church congregation had begun to dwindle, and by 1982 the congregation numbered about 20 persons. The decision was made to disband the congregation, and the property was put on the market for sale in early 1982. At that time, the hope was expressed by the governing board of the Christian Science Church that the property would continue to be utilized as the site of a Christian ministry. (7)

In October of 1983, the First United Methodist Church of Oakland made an offer to buy the property. Final approval for the purchase was given by the governing board of the Methodist Church on February 19, 1984.

On April 15, 1984, the First United Methodist Church of Oakland and St. Stephens Methodist Church merged to become Lake Merritt United Methodist Church. One of the conditions of the merger agreement was that the permanent home of the new church would be at 1330 Lakeshore Avenue. After a lengthy investigation of the structure by architects, engineers, a cost estimator, and a testing laboratory, the decision was made by the church to replace the existing building with a new building.

# B. Physical History

- 1. Date of Groundbreaking: December, 1921
- 2. Date of Completion: June 3, 1923 (1B)
- 3. Architect: Carl Werner of San Francisco. Trained in the Beaux-Arts tradition at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. (1C)
- 4. Original Owner: Fourth Church of Christ Scientist, Oakland. (1B)
- 5. Subsequent Owner(s): In 1984-First United Methodist Church of Oakland, which merged with St. Stephens Methodist Church of Oakland to become Lake Merritt United Methodist Church.
- 6. Builder: Mission Concrete Co. of San Francisco (1B)

Original plans for construction of the building were begun after the selection of Mr. Werner as architect on October 20, 1920. Ground was broken on December 16, 1921. Only the rear portion, or Sunday School section of the church was constructed at the beginning, and services were first held in the Sunday School section on July 2, 1922. Construction of the remainder of the building was completed on June 3, 1923. The building was finally dedicated on April 22, 1945 when all obligations were paid. (1B)

The project cost of the building, including construction cost and architect's fees was \$102,300. Equipment and furnishings cost an additional \$44,700. Copies of the architect's drawings are on file at the Oakland City Hall. (1B)

The journal, "Architect and Engineer", dated June, 1923 (Vol.73, No. 3) includes an article titled, "Some Recent Work of Carl Werner, Architect". This work notes recent completion of this building along with some reproductions of plans and elevations. Carl Werner received his architectural training at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and opened his San Francisco practice in 1898. He was accomplished in the Beaux Arts tradition, and he was known for his public buildings, throughout the San Francisco Bay area, including the South San Francisco City Hall, the Alameda High School, Lowell High School of San Francisco, the Alameda County Court House, and the Oakland Scottish Rite Temple. He made a specialty of designing Masonic Halls, having designed 90% of the Masonic Halls of Northern California by the date of his death in 1943. (1c)

Some minor alterations to the plans of the building had occurred during construction. Provisions were made for the usher's rooms at the west end, on each side of the portico. Provisions for heavier beams below the balcony were made to support the weight of intended future organ pipes and chimes. These were never installed. (1B)

At some point, the cornice decorations were removed from the usher room wings on each side of the entrance portico. (8)

## C. Historical Context

The Lake Merritt area of Oakland consists of commercial, residential and public buildings of varying sizes. The site of Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist building, at 1330 Lakeshore Avenue, is on the east side of Lake Merritt in the block bounded by East 16th Street, First Avenue, East 12th Street, and Lakeshore Avenue. The site contains 37,800 square feet and now covers the entire area between Lakeshore Avenue and First Avenue, on an hour glass shaped, roughly rectangular lot.

The First Avenue exposure of the property faces the eastern extension of East 14th Street. The

Lakeshore Avenue side of the property looks over Lake Merritt to several public buildings of Oakland: The Henry J.Kaiser Auditorium, Alameda County Courthouse, Main Oakland Public Library, Camron-Stanford House, and the original boat house. The last two buildings are located directly across from the site.

The majority of the buildings in the Lake Merritt area date from 1900 to 1930, with some alterations occurring more recently. A 24 story apartment building was built adjacent to the south side of the church in the mid 1960's.

The primary use of the 1330 Lakeshore building and property was church home for members of Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist.

# Part II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

#### A. GENERAL

The Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist building is designed after the style of a classical temple. The central space in the composition is the rectangular auditorium, two stories in height. The side walls of the auditorium protrude outward as curved walls to create a partial drum form. The ceiling of the auditorium includes a suspended shallow concave "dome". The rear portion of the building is defined by a semi-circular wall which encloses the two story Sunday School space, offices and ancillary rooms for various worship service participants. A structural concrete wall separates this section from the main auditorium section of the building. A small basement for the boiler is located under the south-central portion of the rear section of the building and side entrance porch. (7)

The front or west elevation on Lakeshore Avenue is composed as a classical facade. Eight fluted plaster columns with cement-plaster capitals of the corinthian order support a heavily proportioned entablature and parapet. The entablature is ornamented with plaster dentils and lion's head medallions and merges into a cornice. A tripartite, paneled parapet

surmounts the entablature and cornice and is inscribed, "Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist." Plaster bas relief panels are cast into the wall on each side. Behind the colonnade, three oak paneled double entrance doors open into the foyer. The doors have half round fanlights above. The windows flanking the entry doors are set in arched recesses of the same size as the doors. The fanlights project into the elliptical vaulted ceiling form of the foyer at right angles to the vaultline.

Comparison of the structure as it appears today with early photographs and drawings show that there have been few alterations, except for the removed cornice decorations at the Usher Room wings.

All of the walls of the building are constructed of lightly reinforced concrete and are coated with cement plaster. The cement plaster is scored to imitate stone. All decorative detail is of molded cement plaster in the manner of pargeting. (1A, 3, 8)

## B. DESCRIPTION OF STRUCTURE

### 1. DIMENSIONS

The Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist building is 105 feet wide in the north-south direction at the front and 132 feet deep in the east-west direction. It is 40 feet high at the parapet from the datum of the foyer floor. (Actual dimensions are shown on the reproductions of the original drawings in the photographic section of this report.)

# 2. FOUNDATIONS

The foundation is of poured-in-place concrete perimeter spread footings extending an average of six feet into the ground. The southeast corner of the building was underpinned by five offset piers in 1964 when the 24 story tower was constructed to the south. The depth of the boiler room basement extends ten feet below the rear section of the building, which is 2 feet higher than the foyer. (7, 8)

### 3. WALLS

Exterior concrete walls are 12 inches thick with 9 inch parapets above. The only reinforcing is at the perimeter of the larger windows, the freestanding parapet and the portico columns. The walls are clad in cement plaster with all decorative details of molded or scored-in-place cement plaster done when the plaster was wet. Column capitals were molded before installation. The cornice, described as part of the portico entablature, extends around the sides of the building for a length of 28 feet. It then turns into a belt course with no decoration to the rear of the building. (3, 8)

### 4. STRUCTURAL FRAMING SYSTEM

The one and two story structure is supported by its perimeter concrete walls and by an interior column and truss framing system. All floors, roofs and interior partitions are framed of wood construction and are supported by the steel truss work and exterior walls. (3)

The auditorium ceiling and roof are supported by four open web steel columns carrying the steel main trusses in the east-west direction. Smaller trusses in the north-south direction span between the primary trusses and to the exterior walls. The entire coffered ceiling is suspended from these trusses and wood joist infill by wire hangers. (3)

The heavy entablature and parapet over the portico are supported by the eight front columns and are anchored back into the main structure only by the end walls and minimal soffit slab.

An intermediate concrete wall, 12 inches thick, separates the auditorium on the west from the two story Sunday School and offices section of the building on the east. The Sunday School room is two stories in height, except that a mezzanine balcony is partially suspended from the roof with steel rods and also supported by slim turned wood columns from below. The balcony encircles the semi-circular shaped Sunday School room. Offices, Reading Room and ancillary rooms are located on each side of this space to the north and south. (3,8)

## 5. PORCHES AND SPECIAL FEATURES

The west facade of the building is a two story high porch at the top of two flights of concrete stairs which extend almost the full width of the colonnade. At each end of the portico is mounted a cast cement urn shaped pedastal containing indirect illumination fixtures. (3, 8)

A second porch is located two thirds of the length along the south elevation and serves as entrance to the Sunday School and office areas. The auditorium also exits onto the south pathway via a pair of doors at the midpoint of the auditorium wall. (8)

Other than the decorative classical entrance portico structure and the wet-formed pargeting referred to above, there are no other distinguishing exterior constructions on most walls. The one story wings on each side of the entrance are decorated with pairs of pilasters framing a cast cement decorative panel. The cast cement cornice ornamentation shown at the tops of these wings was removed due to excessive deterioration. (3, 7, 8)

## 6. OPENINGS

Three pairs of entrance doors with fanlights above comprise the primary entrance to the building behind the portico structure. The doors are of solid paneled oak, now painted a faded orange. They were outfitted with panic hardware in recent years.

The south exit from the auditorium is also a pair of solid oak paneled doors. The north and south exits from the Sunday School/office section of the building are pairs of wood doors with full height glass lights. All of these pairs of doors have been fitted with panic hardware. There are no other entry or exit doors.

The west facade has two pairs of windows flanking the entrance doors. Five pairs of casement windows above the entrance doors, one between each pair of columns, open out from the top of the auditorium balcony.

The auditorium has five large stained glass windows on each of the curved north and south walls. These windows each measure approximately five by twelve feet. Their bases are set within roof wells below the line of the single story construction at each side wall elevation. The glass is of a geometric design of intersecting yellow bands surrounding a draped shield. The design is not pictorial of persons or scenes and is predominently filled with obscure clear glass.

The rear wall of the Sunday School section of the building, now exposed to First Avenue, has upper and lower rows of 13 windows each. These windows, together with the rear portion of the north and south wall windows, were originally of double hung wood sash. They were replaced with aluminum casement sash at some time during the past 20 years. (8)

# 7. ROOFS

Roofing on the building is entirely of built-up "tar and gravel" contained within the perimeter parapets. The substrate is diagonal wood sheathing over joists. (8)

Over the center section of the auditorium is a large sheet metal monitor containing attic ventilation and a wire glass skylight. This skylight illuminates the auditorium through a ten-foot diameter stained glass oculus in the center of the shallow suspended "dome". (8)

# C. DESCRIPTION OF INTERIOR

# 1. FLOOR PLANS

The main floor consists of three primary areas which are symmetrical about an east-west axis: the Foyer, the Auditorium and the Sunday School. There are various ancillary rooms and toilet rooms flanking these spaces.

The Foyer is approximately 70 feet wide by 17 feet deep. An open stair extends to the balcony from each side of the Foyer. Restrooms are located to the south, a check room for coats and hats, and a small book room under the

stair, to the north. The elliptical vaulted ceiling of the Foyer extends in the north-south direction to allow the balcony platform to slope above it.

From the Foyer, one enters the Auditorium through one of the five pairs of full height glass doors. The main auditorium is 65 feet wide at the east and west walls and expands to 94 feet wide at the cross axis. It has a floor sloping down to the east such that it drops three feet in its length. The height of the room is an average of 27 feet to the suspended ceiling. The concave "dome" extends another seven feet above this point and is 45 feet in diameter.

The colonial georgian style of the walls and ceiling are uniformly painted an off-white color. The room contained pews for seating about 750 persons, with two center aisles and two side aisles. (8)

The room is oriented east to the rostrum, which is three feet above the bottom of the sloped floor. The rostrum was outfitted with two reader's podiums and two presiding chairs. Two doors exit to a narrow rear hallway from the rostrum. A free standing column on each side is paired with a pilaster at each side wall to frame the rostrum. An ornamental plaster screen, behind which is located a crowded organ pipe loft is mounted above. The organ console was originally below the rostrum in a well. (lA, 8) It was subsequently relocated to the center front of the auditorium. On either side of the rostrum are exit doors leading to the rear portion of the building.

Behind the concrete wall separating the Auditorium from the Sunday School is the main Sunday School room. It is a two-level, two story space, 18 feet high, surrounded by a balcony. The actual two story space is only 20 by 10 feet wide, although the entire floor of the room is an average of 36 feet by 90 feet wide. The areas under the balcony are divided into ten alcoves, separated by roll-up wood slat doors. These alcoves were used as reading areas for the various classes. On the west wall of the room is a wood platform and podium for a reader to read to the combined classes.

The Sunday School room is flanked on the north by two reader's rooms with toilets and on the south by offices. The entrance and exit doors to the room are in the northwest and southwest corners. The southwest exit foyer contains bathrooms for the children. The northwest foyer has a small examination room. These foyers also contain open stairways to the second floor as well as short flights of stairs to the lower level exit doors, which lead out of the Auditorium.

There is a second floor in two different areas of the building. The steeply sloped auditorium balcony above the Foyer contained pew space for about 250 persons. Usher rooms are located at the mid landing level of each stairway on either side of the balcony.

The rear portion of the building contains rooms on the north for ushers and organist and rooms on the south for the church offices and a reading room. The area between the north and south sections is the balcony opening into the Sunday School below.

### 2. STAIRWAYS

The four open stairways in the building are located as described above. The two stairways which lead from the Foyer to the Auditorium Balcony have twisted vertical wrought iron banisters surmounted by a shaped oak rail. The newell posts at the bottoms have carved wood blossom finials.

#### 3. FLOORING

The Auditorium, the Foyer and stairs were carpeted. The balcony was also carpeted, as were the various ancillary halls and rooms, for readers, ushers, organist and the reading room. All other floors, hallways and stairs are of linoleum. The Sunday School has an oak stripped floor. (7)

## 4. WALLS AND CEILINGS

The most elaborately finished room in the building is the Auditorium. The walls of the room are divided by false pilasters of a fluted

plaster finish sitting on a three foot base band which runs around the perimeter of the room. The frieze band at the ceiling is heavily decorated with "stucco" ornament, according to the drawings. The cornice above this frieze conceals indirect lighting around the perimeter of the room. False stone rustications are incised into the plaster fields of the walls between columns and were originally painted to appear to be "French caen stone". There is also a broken pediment form over the south exit doors. It contains a carved center vase and drape and is detailed with closely spaced dentils. (1A, 8)

The ceiling of the Auditorium is divided into panels and coffers. The coffers form a square band around the central "dome". The concave "dome" is suspended above a perimeter lighting cove and is smooth except for a decorative recessed band around the central oculus.(1A,8)

All other walls and ceilings in the building are of smooth plaster finish except at the Foyer. The smooth elliptical vaulted ceiling was originally stencilled around dormers and in bands across the vaults. A heavy jute covered wainscot extends around the room and is trimmed in oak moldings. The jute wainscot was also used in the Sunday School room, toilet rooms and various other locations. The wainscots have been painted over several times. (8)

#### 5. OPENINGS

Most interior doors in the building are two part paneled wood doors. Doors opening from the rear foyers into the Sunday School have frosted glass upper panels.

There is a glass wall above a wood wainscot which forms the wall between the second floor reading room and the librarian's area.

# 6. DECORATIVE PLASTER GRILLE

The decorative plaster grille in front of the organ pipes in the Auditorium was cast in sections and mounted on a steel channel grid network. The design of intersecting circular forms is painted gold and appears as a highly decorative curtain above the rostrum. (8)

#### 7. HARDWARE

Almost all hardware in the building is simple stock bronze and brasswork and steel without special features. (7)

# 8. MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT

a. Heating was by means of an oil fired boiler which was converted to gas at some time in the past. The boiler was assembled in place in the basement below the south entrance porch. The Auditorium is heated by means of ducted flow heat trenches along the north and south curved walls. The heat enters the room through ornamental wood grilles located below each of the art glass windows and by grilles on the face of the rostrum. Ventilation of the sanctuary is by natural means of opening windows and doors. The building is not mechanically cooled or ventilated.

The Sunday School room is also heated by forced air via the same heat trench under the rostrum which serves the sanctuary. All other rooms were heated by portable electrical resistance heaters. This was originally intended by the designer, as each room is serviced by a 220 volt, 18 ampere outlet. (7)

- b. The building is serviced by two sets of public restrooms and several private toilet rooms. Altogether, there are three toilets and three urinals for men, three toilets for women and five other private toilets. There are nine wash basins and one janitor sink. There is a drinking fountain in each restroom at the foyer and in the rear foyer. There are no showers. (8)
- c. Lighting is entirely incandescent, either indirect or direct. Lighting in the Auditorium is by indirect perimeter cove lighting. Lighting in the Foyer is by means of eight brass wall bracket fixtures which throw light up onto the curved ceiling. Lighting under the balcony and above the balcony is by means of round semi-recessed fixtures. All other lighting is by means of either surface mounted or pendant fixtures. (7, 8)

### 9. ORGAN

The organ installed in the Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist is a Henry Pilcher and Sons three manual, 29 voice, 31 rank electric-pneumatic action pipe organ with an electronic harp and electric action chimes. The original instrument was built in the early 1920's. It was modernized and enlarged by John Swinford. A Moller console was added in 1965, when the console was located to the main floor of the Auditorium. A recent static reservoir was located in the basement. (4)

The organ has been removed from the building and is being rebuilt by Swain and Kates of San Francisco. It is to be installed in the new Methodist Church. (7)

# 10. ORIGINAL FURNISHINGS

At the time of purchase by the Lake Merritt United Methodist Church, the only furniture remaining in the building were wooden pews, capable of seating almost 1000 persons, and some unremarkable miscellaneous chairs and tables, including folding tables. All furniture was removed.

The pews were slightly curved to fit the Auditorium and were finished in a gray-stained oak. They have been removed and distributed to several other churches. (7)

## D. BUILDING SITE

The site at 1330 Lakeshore Avenue, on the east side of Lake Merritt, extends eastward all the way to First Avenue. It is an hour glass shaped rectangular site 295.3 feet deep along the straight east-west line. The Lakeshore frontage is on a 850 foot radius, 145 feet long. The First Avenue frontage is on a 606 foot radius, 142 feet long. (5, 8)

The First Avenue portion of the site is almost entirely covered by asphaltic concrete for parking. Forty cars were able to squeeze onto the lot, although not in conformance with City

required parking clearances. There is a four foot wide planter section along the south border, with high shrubs, growing against the wall of the adjacent concrete parking structure. To the north is a seven foot concrete block wall constructed as part of the adjacent housing project. (8)

There is a drop of 10 feet from east frontage (First Avenue) to the west frontage of the site on Lakeshore Avenue. With the high tide of Lake Merritt constituting the O datum elevation, the bottom of the entrance stairs is at an elevation of +3.2 feet. The top of the stairs, or porch behind the portico, is at +12.7 feet. The foyer is at +8.67 feet.(3,8)

The main entrance stairs are flanked by two small lawn areas. In the center of the lawn area on each side is a mature Ginko tree. Several varieties of shrubs cover the building base. Juniper bushes are located between the sidewalk and lawn at each side of the entrance.

A path leads along the south side of the building from Lakeshore Avenue to the side entrance. It slopes up from +3.1 feet at the sidewalk to +12.9 feet in front of the side porch. The walk is bounded on the south by a wall of evergreen trees and agapantha shrubs. As a whole, the landscaping is overgrown and obscures existing pathways. Earlier photographs show minimal landscaping around the building, save for front lawns and small trees.

## PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation was carried out in 1988-89 by the building committee of the Lake Merritt United Methodist Church of Oakland, California, in accordance with the directives of the Oakland City Planning Department, that this building be documented to Historic American Building Survey standards prior to demolition.

The information in this report was compiled from the sources listed in the Bibliography.

Record photography was carried out by John Turner, photographer, of Oakland, California. Historic photographs were obtained from a representative of the Fourth Church of Christ, Scientist, and copied with his permission by John Turner.

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